



Subject:
Date:



What Local Government in the Huon Valley should look like
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To whom it may concern

Thank you for this opportunity to have a say

Here are my comments for consideration in the future of the Huon Valley, where my partner and I currently live.

We are in favour of proposal 1, keeping the two Council areas.

We have lived experience of these sorts of issues in Victoria where we previously lived.

Without this experience the proposals could seem a non event. But believe us when we say the residents of the Huon Valley will be disadvantaged by any amalgamation.

For all of you in the Huon Valley there is only one choice. Option 1

Before moving to Dover recently, we had lived and worked in Apollo Bay which was previously in the Otway Shire. This Shire was well managed and Councillors were responsive to residents requests and responded quickly to various issues.

The Shire was financially well managed and ran at a profit, which was steadily accumulated to give the shire a buffer to be used for unexpected events such as rock gals, floods and tidal surges, events often caused by nature.

For us the amalgamation with the Colac region (Colac is 50k away) to form the Colac Otway Shire was, and still is, a huge disaster for the smaller Otway Shire.

My reasons are the following:

1. We had/have minimum or zero representation on this Council. This has meant little attention to our area.
2. The region of the Great Ocean Road has meant tourists flocking to the town of Apollo Bay. We have been unable to make our concerns heard. This has meant frustration over parking for locals and tourists. We had/have up to 60-70 buses pull in and take up the main road and two of the back roads. This was dangerous for people walking and for accidents caused by vehicles blocking intersection vision
3. Money has been generated from rates in Apollo Bay as properties became desirable as tourism boomed. However very little was returned to our area in terms of services
4. When money was spent decisions were made from afar, from a community that did not represent Apollo Bay. These decisions were mainly from Colac Otway Shire. It also recently from the State Government.
5. Frustration has mounted and recently residents have formed a new group and have started to fight back, against the Shire and State Government proposals to do or 'develop' areas with no or very little consultation.

These reasons apply to any proposal to amalgamate our Shire with any other area.

My daughter is in a small unique area of rural Victoria, that was also amalgamated. It has completely changed her town and many in the surrounding districts. Properties cut up to allow huge housing estates with incredibly crowded housing in small blocks, with little or no services, including schools, clubs, recreational areas and space such as trees and waterways. Hence crime has spiralled as there is nothing for those in the estates to do, particularly young people.

Areas around Geelong and the Surf Coast have experienced similar issues.

We do not really like the way Kingston has developed, although we once thought it was gorgeous and we nearly bought property there.

So for residents to be represented and have a meaningful dialogue with their Shire, do NOT consider amalgamation.

Finally, in our travels, we called into Mitchell QLD, home of the Great Artesian Spa and other attractions in the area.

When wandering around we were talking to the locals about their gorgeous, quaint rural town.

Many commented that this has been due to the hard work of local volunteers fighting against a remote, and very different Shire they now find themselves in. In Mitchell amalgamation also meant the end to local representation and has been a disaster for residents. They have had no or minor local representation and therefore are not able to be heard, so have had to form community groups and worked extremely hard to develop their town with no financial assistance. There is a lot of resentment for a council which is remote, for which they have effectively no voice and which is representative of very different interests.

The story of this town, and so many others in unique areas of rural Australia, mirrors ours in Colac Otway Shire and other parts of rural Victoria.

We urge you to select Option 1.
No amalgamation.

